

Message Text

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17

ACTION EA-09

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INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

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E.O.11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR CB SW

SUBJECT: DIPLOMAT'S VISIT TO CAMBODIA: SIEM REAP

REF: PEKING 395, 196

1. FOLLOWING IS TEXT (UNNECESSARY WORDS OMITTED) OF
MUNRO'S REPORT ON SWEDISH AMBASSADOR BJORK'S OBSERVA-
TION OF CONDITIONS IN CAMBODIA:

2. BEGIN TEXT: THE FIRST WESTERNER TO
TOUR CAMBODIA SINCE LAST APRIL'S KHMER ROUGE VICTORY HAS
DESRIBED A MONEYLESS SOCIETY WHERE THE PTOLE ARE WORKING UNDER
"TOTAL MOBILIZATION" TO CREATE THE MOST COMMUNISTIC
SOCIETY IN THE WORLD.

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BJORK PICTURED CAMBODIA AS A NATION UNDER TIGHT MILITARY CONTROL AND LED BY NATIONALISTIC, MARXIST INTELLECTUALS WHOSE GOALS ARE MORE RADICAL THAN THOSE OF THE LEADERS OF THE PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF CHINA. IN AN INTERVIEW AFTER HIS RETURN FROM A TWO WEEKS STAY IN CAMBODIA, BJORK SAID HE SAW NO SIGNS OF STARVATION AND ATTRIBUTED THIS TO THE CONTROVERSIAL DECISION OF CAMBODIA'S LEADERS TO FORCE PEOPLE OUT OF CITIES TO WORK IN RICE FIELDS AFTER THE KHMER ROUGE VICTORY.

3. HE SAID THERE IS IN CAMBODIA NO PRIVATE OWNERSHIP, THERE ARE NOT EVEN ANY PRIVATE PLOTS FOR PEASANTS AS IN EVERY OTHER COMMUNIST COUNTRY. THERE IS NO MONEY AND PEOPLE ARE NOT PAID WAGES; THOSE NOT WORKING ON THE LAND MUST DEPEND ON RATIONS AND ON BARTERING. BJORK SAID HE DID NOT SEE A SINGLE SHOP IN OPERATION DURING HIS VISIT.

4. HE SAID DESTRUCTION WROUGHT BY THE WAR COULD BE SEEN EVERYWHERE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. US BOMBERS "DESTROYED A NUMBER OF SMALL COMMUNITIES ALL OVER THE COUNTRY" AND SEEMED TO HAVE KNOCKED DOWN EVERY BRIDGE. ROADS ARE STILL SCARRED BY CRATERS LEFT BY BOMBS AND MINES AND THE OBSTRUCTIONS DUG BY THE GUERILLAS; ROADSIDES ARE LITTERED WITH THE HULKS OF CARS, TANKS AND OTHER MILITARY HARDWARE.

5. BJORK SAID WHEREVER HE WENT IN CAMBODIA HE SAW "ENOURMOUS NUMBERS OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH MACHINE GUNS OR OTHER GUNS." THEY WERE GUARDING THE STREETS OF PHNOM PENH AND MANNING NUMEROUS CHECKPOINTS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE." "AROUND PHNOM PENH YOU COULD SEE YOUNGSTERS MARCHIN, ALL OF THEM WITH A HOE AND A SPADE, SOME OF THEM ALSO CARRYING A GUN. I GOT THE VERY STRONG IMPRESSION THAT THE REGIME HAS ACTIVE SUPPORT FROM THIS KIND OF YOUNG PERSON."

BJORK AND A DELEGATION OF DIPLOMATS FROM THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES WERE ACCOMPANIED BY A SOMETIMES HEAVY MILITARY ESCORT WHEN THEY TRAVELLED IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. IN THE CAPITAL, HE FOUND IT VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO WALK AROUND FREELY BECAUSE HE WAS FOLLOWED BY ARMED SECURITY MEN AND DENIED ENTRY INTO SOME DISTRICTS.

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6. HE SAID: YOU ARE IMMEDIATELY BH7:K BY THE EMPTY STREETS; EVERY SHOP IS CLOSED; FLATS LOOK EMPTY; BUT BY AND BY YOU DISCOVER THERE IS SOME LIFE, ESPECIALLY IN THE OUTSKIRTS." ALTHOUGH A FEW PEOPLE ARE BEING PERMITTED BACK INTO THE CAPITAL FOR DESIGNATED WORK, BJORK WAS TOLD THERE ARE STILL ONLY BETWEEN ONE HUNDRED AND TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND PEOPLE IN PHNOM COMPARED WITH SIX HUNDRED THOUSAND BEFORE 1970 AND TWO POINT FIVE MILLION, MAINLY REFUGEES, WHEN THE KHMER ROUGE CONQUERED THE CITY LAST APRIL.

PROBLEM THEN WAS FEEDING A POPULATION WHICH HAD BEEN KEPT ALIVE BY FOOD BROUGHT IN BY CONVOYS UP THE MEKONG RIVER AND THEN BY A US AIR LIFT. THE KHMER ROUGE SOLUTION, WHICH JOLTED PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD, WAS TO FORCE EVERYBODY INTO THE COUNTRYSIDE. "THEY ARGUE THAT THEY DIDN'T HAVE ANY TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES TO BRING FOOD TO THE PEOPLE AND SO THE LOGICAL THING WAS TO BRING THE PEOPLE TO THE FOOD; THAT IS, TO EVACUATE THEM ALL AND MAKE THEM GET OUT INTO THE RICE FIELDS." CAMBODIAN LEADERS ALSO TOLD BJORK THAT THEY HAD FEARED THAT POLITICAL OPPOSITION WOULD QUICKLY SURFACE IN THE CITIES IF THEY FAILED TO FEED PEOPLE.

7. SIGNS OF THE POPULATION UPRHEAVAL ARE EVERYWHERE. SOME FORMER CITY DWELLERS ARE LIVING IN TEMPORARY SHANTYTOWNS; OTHERS ARE "GUESTS" OF PEASANTS WHO WERE REQUIRED TO GIVE SHELTER TO THEM, PEOPLE ARE APPARENTLY STILL BEING SHIFTED AROUND; BJORK FREQUENTLY SAW TRUCKLOADS OF PEOPLE BEING TRANSPORTED HERE AND THERE.

8. THE COUNTRYSIDE IS IN A STATE OF "TOTAL MOBILIZATION" PROVINCES ARE ORGANIZED INTO DISTRICTS UNDER WHICH ARE COMMUNES. THE LOWEST LEVEL OF ORGANIZATION IS THE COOPERATIVE. BJORK SAID HE SAW GROUPS OF TWENTY OR TWENTYFIVE THOUSAND WORKERS, MOBILIZED BY DISTRICT ORGANIZATIONS, DIGGING NEW OR DEEPER IRRIGATION CANALS AND BUILDING DAMS. THE AIM IS TO CREATE A WATER CONTROL SYSTEM WHICH WILL ENSURE TWO OR EVEN THREE RICE HARVESTS A YEAR. "EVERYTHING IN THE COUNTRY DEPENDS ON THIS GETTING MORE RICE AND GETTING ENOUGH RICE FOR EXPORTS... THEY BELIEVE THAT THEY WILL VERY SOON BE ABLE TO START EXPORTING AND THEY POINTED OUT THAT THEY HAVE ALREADY GIVEN A NOT INSIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF RICE TO LAOS."

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9. CAMBODIA'S LEADERS ENVISION USING THE INCOME FROM RICE EXPORTS TO BUILD SMALL FACTORIES IN SCATTERED LOCATIONS IN THE RURAL AREAS. THEY PLAN TO STRICTLY CONTROL THE POPULATION OF THE TOWNS AND CITIES, BJORK SAID, LIMITING PHNOM PENH TO "NOT MORE THAN A FEW HUNDRED THOUSAND."

10. ASKED ABOUT REPORTS THAT PEOPLE ARE STARVING IN CAMBODIA, BJORK REPLIED, "HOW CAN I JUDGE? I SAW NO SIGNS OF STARVATION. I SAW LOTS OF PEOPLE WORKING IN THE FIELDS. I SAW ENORMOUS NUMBERS OF CHILDREN WHO LOOKED QUITE HEALTHY AND QUITE LIVELY"

11. ASKED ABOUT REPORTS THAT FORMER CITY DWELLERS UNUSUED TO AGRICULTURAL LABOR ARE SUFFERING, HE SAID "IT IS TRUE THAT THEY MAKE PEOPLE WORK IN THE FIELDS, IN THE SUN, WITH A HOE AND A SPADE..."

BUT YOU DO NOT GET THE IMPRESSION THAT THEY ARE WORKING VERY HARD ALL
THE TIME. PEOPLE VERY OFTEN TAKE A PAUSE. THERE ARE PEOPLE SITTING
AROUND" END TEXT.
THAYER

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